

NCTC, December 14-15, 2005

NATIVE FISH RESTORATION:

Case histories of our successes through partnerships

Aristotle (384-322 B.C.), a Greek philosopher and student of Plato, is generally regarded as one of the greatest and most influential thinkers in Western culture. He addressed virtually every existing branch of human knowledge, and he conducted the first known organized research in natural science, including the heredity and movement of animals. A mentor of the legendary Alexander the Great, he instilled in him the love of Greek learning. Alexander provided financial support for Aristotle's researches; his men collected biological specimens and data and sent them to Aristotle in Athens. It seems likely that Aristotle's statement quoted above concerning the seeming irreversibility of our actions may have been sparked by his observations as a naturalist.

In more recent years, American philosopher George Santayana reminded us that: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

Probably nowhere has this wisdom been reflected as it has through impacts exerted on the Earth's biota through the widespread introduction of alien species into our formerly balanced ecosystems. We have learned that nature tolerates no vacuums, either physical or biological, and that once changed, it is difficult (but not necessarily impossible) to emulate the original circumstance.

However, there is a brighter side: Aristotle had neither the insight nor technology available to us today. As we strive to restore threatened and endangered native fishes, we can offer new angling opportunities in the process.

Much success has already been experienced in this field. Examples are provided by ongoing joint federal/state cooperative restoration programs: South Fork Kern River golden trout (California's state fish) throughout its native habitat; Gila trout in New Mexico; Apache trout in Arizona; eastern brook trout in the Carolinas, and bull and cutthroat trout in areas of the West.

Current restoration programs can also provide unexplored opportunities. For instance, native species recovery efforts for the roundtail chub in Arizona could result in the reestablishment of historic sport fisheries. The Colorado River's pikeminnow are still remembered by old timers for both their sporting and culinary qualities, when lengths of five feet and weights of 80 pounds and more were not uncommon. Such management concepts have long been in practice in other parts of the world (such as the United Kingdom) and hold much potential as human populations in the U.S. continue to expand.

To address an intriguing management opportunity, the National Conservation Training Center will present on Wednesday and Thursday, December 14-15, 2005 two 3-hour distance learning workshops conducted by Chris Horsch, Chief of Conservation Science and Policy Training; and Phil Pister, retired California Department of Fish and Game aquatic biologist with a long history of managing both sport and T&E fishes throughout the Southwest.

Panelists will include federal and state fishery biologists and academic researchers who will discuss the history and methodologies of these programs and how they can provide bright spots in the nation's future fisheries management programs.

We are surely in a position now to make Aristotle and Santayana smile a bit. We can indeed remember the past, and we can learn from it. We welcome you to join us as we discuss this enormously important subject. How will posterity judge our current angling enhancement efforts in the year 2105? We will continue to plant and move fish around the nation in support of sport fishing programs. Perhaps these lessons from the past will help us in the future to preserve biodiversity while providing new and unique angling

opportunities for both native and traditional sport fishes. As the late Stephen Jay Gould reminded us, we are trapped in the ignorance of our own generation, and only time will allow us to judge the wisdom of our actions. But we are finally beginning to see the light, and we can do a better job with the technologies and public support now available to us. Perhaps we *can* have our cake and eat it, too!!